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ABSTRACT

This report describes programs for Alaska's children. Discussed are the efforts of the Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth to construct a coherent, long-term, and effective children's policy for the state. A comprehensive system of services rooted in prevention and intervention is proposed for future long-term policy development. Agenda issues discussed include the economy, education, health care and health care financing, the role of the federal government, children living in poverty, children's abuse of alcohol and other drugs, violence, separated native families, and demographics. Specific changes in programs and services for children and youth are described. Discussion then turns to the untouched and unfinished agenda for children. Considered are proposals made by the governor to the legislature that remain unfunded; issues about which the commission has made no concrete proposals beyond those contained in a 1988 report to the governor; and issues that the commission was not able to deal with. Recommendations for business and private sector involvement, government and public sector responsibilities, and parent support initiatives are offered. A 15-page chart lists the commission's original 85 recommendations and describes the progress made on each. The report concludes by identifying immediate priorities for funding and for consideration by a new commission. (SH)

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The Unfinished Agenda: Caring for Alaska's Children

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An Updated Report

The Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth

August 1989

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Finally, the Commission would like to extend its thanks and gratitude to all of you who advocate on behalf of Alaska's children and youth. Your dedication has been an inspiration.

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STATE OF ALASKA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
JUNEAU

GOVERNOR'S INTERIM COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

August 1989

Dear Governor Cowper,

As we complete service on the Interim Commission on Children and Youth we offer an updated report - "Caring for Alaska's Children: the Unfinished Agenda."

This updated report provides you and other concerned Alaskans with a current view of programs for children. It is a review of what has been accomplished, a beginning guide for policy development, and a look at some remaining issues.

Throughout the past two years, on your behalf, we have heard from over 500 Alaskans on various topics related to children and youth. Most of their concerns have not been adequately addressed. As we close-out our terms and summarize their comments, it appears many of their greatest desires, including the most frequent request - to establish an ongoing children's commission - remain unfulfilled.

It has been a privilege and honor to serve you and the families of Alaska on this Commission. We have been both pleased with the progress towards achieving many of our recommendations and disappointed that more have not yet been implemented.

We look to you to keep the forward momentum, and we are willing to assist in any way we can.

Sincerely,

Patty Meritt

Patty Meritt
Chair

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INTRODUCTION

As the Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth completes its term, we want to offer our final thoughts and recommendations.

To a person, we feel privileged to have served.

When Governor Cowper and the Legislature invested millions of new dollars in children's services at a time of severe recession in our state, they sent an unmistakable message to the Alaskan people and to leaders and citizens across the nation: that Alaska cares for its children.

The Governor appointed the twenty-two citizens, legislators, and government officials to debate and disagree, to reach out to Alaskans and to bring back to him the best of our conclusions and the people's suggestions.

We have done that.

Thanks to Governor Cowper's leadership, and to the bipartisan legislative Children's Caucus, Alaskans can be pleased with what has been accomplished over the last two years for our children and our future.

In this final report we review those accomplishments. And we list what we believe to be the unfinished agenda for this and future administrations, for the Legislature, and for the Alaskan people.

For while we did much, there is much to be done.

While we heard from many, many more wished to speak.

While we helped some to help themselves, many more are in despair and in confusion.

For all we have done, there is still more to do.

We have no illusions about the financial challenges facing all Alaskans. We must choose more carefully than ever how to invest our wealth.

We believe that, when those choices are made, our children must come first.

We thank Governor Cowper and the Legislature for bringing that day closer; in their hands lies the future of our children.

INTRODUCTION

Across the nation attention is focused on how to best help families raise happy, healthy, responsible children.

Data has shown significant cost savings through investments in prevention programs. Strong advocacy groups have worked with "public policy entrepreneurs" to increase support for today's changing families.

Two-thirds of the states now have a group empowered to serve in a capacity similar to the Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth in Alaska.

Guided by the Governor's charge to us and by significant public input, we created recommendations for a comprehensive system of services rooted in prevention. Thanks to the administration and legislature and strong public support, progress has been made on implementing some specific recommendations but, overall, children's programs still remain too fragmented, crisis-oriented and critically underfunded.

Major concerns of Alaska such as the erratic economy, the growing number of children in poverty, the statistics of alcohol and other drug abuse, the high rate of violent crime, and the alarming demographic projections underscore the need for a long-term system of investing in prevention.

In the past two years the Interim Commission has heard form more than 500 Alaskans on a multitude of topics. We have listened and learned. From our discussions we have developed a core set of principles to guide policies for children's programs. They include:

- investing in the future and emphasizing prevention;
- taking a long view on evaluation and allowing for a generation of investing;
- designing programs that are community based and culturally appropriate;
- empowering program participants to be self sufficient and developing community capacity rather than dependence;
- strengthening all types of families;
- depending on broad public participation and input;
- developing a partnership between government and business.

At the close of these two years there is still much work ahead. A great many unfunded, undeveloped and untackled issues remain. Even the Governor's original charges to the Interim Commission remain unfinished: there is still not a comprehensive child care system nor are adequate programs in place to stimulate youth to become self sufficient.

Currently there is no children's commission in Alaska to pursue the recommendations developed by the Interim Commission or to address the many issues raised by the public, the legislature and the administration. An ongoing children's commission is essential if we plan to move forward in a logical, systematic way.

Children are not a special interest; they are a common interest of us all. We cannot afford to wait.

A NEW COMMITMENT TO CHILDREN

In the last half of the 1980s, children's needs have taken a dramatic leap into the center of the national political arena. The Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth was, in part, a result of this long overdue, bipartisan consensus on the importance of early investments in children's needs.

■ The National Context

Over the last decade, several major trends coalesced to spark this renewed attention on how best to help families raise happy, healthy children.

Reaction to specific crises led to a more general belief that child development is related to economic development.

The mid-decade education reports that called us "a nation at risk" led to increased concern with the quality of the 21st century workforce. The vast increase in the proportion of working mothers led to vigorous debates about how best to help families balance economic needs with family demands, and to concerns about the accessibility and quality of child care. Reports of increases in child abuse and neglect, child poverty, alcohol and other drug abuse, infant mortality, teen pregnancy, teen suicide and a host of other problems led to a new view which acknowledged that all these problems were fundamentally connected to each other. The strength of the nation's economic future was increasingly seen to depend on healthy children and strong families. A continuum of initiatives would be needed from the prenatal period and infancy, through early childhood and the teen years.

A new critical mass of data was developing that supported the economic value of preventing children's problems through investments early in their lives.

The U.S. House Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families[1] synthesis of evaluation data over the last 25 years was central to the developing consensus that prevention pays, not only socially and spiritually, but also in economic returns of $3-$10 in saved costs for every dollar invested. The work of that Committee and others showed us that programs like Head Start and the provision of good prenatal care really work, and that they deserved significantly more investment than heretofore given.

Intense, well organized advocacy for children and families increased, strengthened by new collaborations between business and professional organizations.

Paralleling the select Committee's work and, in fact, furthering its focus on prevention, was the growing professionalism of the early childhood community, as voiced by the 66,000-member National Association for the Education of Young Children.
The Children's Defense Fund was a major catalyst as both a provider of data on the condition of children and a voice for creative policy change. The Committee on Economic Development stimulated numerous business-school collaborations and convinced business leaders that it was wise to invest early in children's lives rather than spend billions later to remedially train young people whose skills are inadequate.

The "family resource movement" grew in response to the increasing stresses affecting family life.

Bipartisan support grew out of the early and mid-1970s White House Conferences on Families and emerged in the mid-1980s in what is now called the "family resource" movement. It became clear that the one strand tying all these concerns together was that of assisting parents to be parents. This included stimulating their economic vitality, providing them the means to use and pay for child care so they could work, and enabling them to have the time off from work to be there when their children need them. These programs helped a new generation of parents to better understand child development, and learn the skills that used to be taught by relatives and friends but which are difficult to develop in today's changing families and communities.

Governmental initiatives for responding to these needs shifted from the federal government to the states.

The dramatic decrease of federal investment in children during the 1980's placed the responsibility for developing and the cost of funding children's programs on the states, and caused a proliferation of state efforts to deal preventively with these complex problems.

What emerged at the state level was a class of Governors who were, as Harvards' Heather Weiss called them, "public policy entrepreneurs,"[1] risk takers and innovators. The coalescing role played by the National Governors Association in analyzing and presenting these state-level models in volumes such as "Bringing Down the Barriers" and "The First Sixty Months" bolstered the support for accelerated state action.

As the interconnectedness and complexity of both the problems and the solutions became apparent, citizen-based children's advocacy groups and state Commissions on Children and Youth emerged. Only a handful of states had such bodies 5 years ago. Today the majority of states have a body established by legislation or executive

order serving a children's commission role, and also have active, citizen-based advocacy groups for children.[2] Federal legislation has also established a National Commission on Children with an imposing mandate to recommend to the President and the U.S. Congress policy answers to fundamental questions about our children's well-being and future.

■ Alaska's Place

Alaska has been part of these larger events. In 1987, things were moving quickly. Governor Steve Cowper had just been elected and had made early commitments to improving the lot of Alaska's children. Major reports on Anchorage runaways and a statistical snapshot of the "state of the Alaskan child" had graphically portrayed the plight of Alaska's most vulnerable citizens.

The House Health, Education and Social Services Committee, inspired by the National Association for the Education of Young Children's annual "week of the child" events, organized hearings on the condition of Alaska's children. The network of Alaskan early childhood program providers figured prominently in the decision to hold "week of the child" hearings. A fledging KIDPAC organization also began to give voice to children's needs.

The beginning of Alaska's economic decline in the mid-1980s and the simultaneous growth in the state's child population fueled increased concern with how Alaska was preparing its young people for economic competitiveness in the fast-changing, internationally-oriented marketplace. As did others across the nation, Alaskans became convinced that new action to promote basic skills and healthy opportunities for children would be a cornerstone of the state's future economic vitality.

The Children's Caucus of the Legislature was established following the "week of the child" hearings. Simultaneously, preparations were already underway for Governor Cowper to name the 22-person Interim Commission on Children and Youth whose responsibilities would include recommending a first class child care system for working parents and plans to improve the economic self-sufficiency of youth. Establishing this Commission and giving it these goals was thus part of a broad trend and yet, in Alaska, it marked a significant initiative apart from what had come before.

During the two years the Commission did its work, the climate for policy analysis and change was deeply affected by the disturbing data coming to light. Alaska's Native people were struggling with cultural change, economic development, alcohol and suicide. An influential series on "A People in Peril" in the *Anchorage Daily News* brought statewide attention to these burgeoning problems. The "family" increasingly emerged as a priority for the Alaska Federation of Natives and the regional Native corporations.

The Interim Commission's report, *Our Greatest Natural Resource: Investing in the Future of Alaska's Children*, was released and the Governor's Children's Funding Package was introduced early in the 15th Legislature. Alaska joined dozens of other states when children were made a substantive issue in the 1987 and 1988 State-of-the-State addresses. At the same time, the formation of a Senate Select Committee on Suicide Prevention, the settlement of the Mental Health Lands Trust and the participation in the Children's Caucus by over half the Alaska Legislature had, together, the cumulative effect of dramatically focusing attention on children and family well-being during a major election year. All these elements combined to bring the necessary political forces together around children's issues. Despite an economic downturn, Alaska invested more than $10 million in new funds for children in FY89. Although the funding initiated in FY89 was maintained, the momentum to fully meet the needs of Alaska's children was slowed in FY90. Furthermore, no new Commission was established to provide the leadership needed to continue this progress.

PROGRESS TO DATE: THE INTERIM COMMISSION'S IMPACT

We stated in our January 1988 report that there were many issues we left untackled. Throughout this updated report, we illustrate once again the accuracy of that acknowledgement: we have barely gotten started.

Perhaps the greatest impact of the Interim Commission has been to serve as a catalyst, a focuser, an organizer, a synthesizer for all the different strands of concern there are for children in our state. The very existence of the Interim Commission tended to make those who work with and care for children feel that the Governor and the Legislature were interested in their concerns and that there was a high-level forum in which to air those concerns and suggestions.

More than 500 Alaskans of all ages, backgrounds, and regions provided testimony to us, in person, through teleconference and in writing, more public participation than experienced by any such commission in Alaska's history. More than the statistics we analyzed, or the trends we thought we were seeing, what led to our recommendations was the emergence of themes in the stories of the people who spoke with us, plainly and often poignantly, sharing their lives, their dreams, their pain, their suggestions. The sheer numbers of people who wished to speak with us, or show something to us, tells us that one of this Commission's most important contributions was giving voice to so many Alaskans who desperately wanted to be heard.

The people have sensed a simple and genuine commitment by the state's leading officials to caring for children. Continuing to show this commitment will have a profound affect on our collective feeling of optimism, willingness to sacrifice, and ability to make the policy innovations necessary to help all Alaska's children grow up safely, healthy and productively.

The recommendations which the Governor and Legislature supported are a beginning. They give us a base to build on. The following is a brief selective look, not at what the funding was, but at what the funding did for Alaskans. Program examples are highlighted by bullets in each section.

■ Child Care

The Commission focused attention on child care as a real economic need and one for which both government and the private sector have some responsibilities. It made clear the correlation between the low status of child care workers as reflected in their pay and the value we place on the care of our children.

- *A child care program in Homer was able to hire a certified pre-*

school teacher with the increase in funds to the Child CareGrant Program.

- *A program in Kodiak was able to improve the quality of its services to children through funds received from the Education and Training Grant Program.*

- *A center in Palmer testified about the benefits of the Day Care Assistance Program in keeping families in that community off welfare.*

■ Parent Support

The Commission was able to reinforce the direct connection between good parenting and healthy, stable children. The Commission has helped Alaskans acknowledge that parenting is a learned skill. While there are many ways in which people learn how to parent - from their own parents, through trial and error, through formal classes and informal support groups - it must in fact be learned.

- *New funds provided services to parents in Barrow, Bethel, Fairbanks, Homer, Juneau, Ketchikan and Nome.*

- *A child care center in Barrow has used funds to hire teen parents to work in the center with threefold benefits: those teens are employed, their children receive child care, and they develop parenting skills.*

- *Testimony the Commission heard from parents about being parents was among the most compelling: "we want to be good parents"; "we don't always know if we're doing the right thing"; "being able to interact with other parents is important"; "we sometimes need help."*

■ Empowering Youth

The Commission began the process of listening to what the next generation of adults - today's youth - had to say: what they need, what they want, what they expect from us and what they're willing to do in return. This new dialogue must not only continue, it must be broadened and it must affect children and family policy.

- *The Commission based many of its recommendations on comments from youth participating in the Alaska Federation of Natives Youth Conference, the Governor's Youth Safety Conference, and the Dram-edy Program, and from young*

children with whom we visited in child care centers and homes.

- *The grants awarded by the Interim Commission in partnership with the Alaska Federation of Natives through the federal Youth 2000 Project provided high school students in Ft. Yukon, Kotzebue and 8 other rural and urban communities across the state an opportunity to be an integral part of the development, planning and implementation of prevention programs that they designed for themselves.*

■ Rural Services

The Commission supported the efforts of rural Alaskans to be active participants in their children's futures, and the growing realization that communities are best served by local people at the local level.

- *Testimony from providers and consumers all over the state indicated the need for human service providers to be knowledgeable about the communities they serve.*

- *Advocacy groups in Bethel and Nome spoke strongly about the need for inter-agency coordination, and Nome later organized an interagency group of 53 organizations concerned with youth issues.*

- *The Governor's Review Committee on Native Services, establishment of which was a recommendation made by the Interim Commission, will be working to ensure local control and participation.*

■ Violence

New funds provided safety, crisis intervention and support services for children who have been abused or neglected, or who are from violent homes.

- *Increased education and therapy services were provided to victims of child sexual abuse in Anchorage.*

- *Other family violence programs were funded to protect and support children in Fairbanks, Dillingham, Kodiak and Nome as well as other urban and rural areas throughout the state.*

■ Prevention

The Commission promoted the long-term, long-range, cost-effective properties of prevention and early intervention. In so doing, the Commission enabled Alaska to be a partner in the greater national dialogue about our collective responsibility to our children and youth.

- *Funds allowed the Fairbanks' Infant Learning Program to expand their services to more children in more communities.*

- *Funding allocated for Head Start Programs has resulted in more than 200 children being able to participate in Head Start in 10 new programs in the state, including programs in Grayling, Selawik, Noorvik, Tuntutuliak, Koyukuk, Copper River, and the Matanuska-Susitna Valley.*

■ Public Participation

The Commission provided a forum in which people could express their concerns, frustrations, fears, hopes, and joy, a forum in which they could freely make suggestions for change with some assurance that those suggestions would be considered. The public participation process is one that must continue and be incorporated in efforts to affect positive change if we are to do the greatest good in the long term. The Commission heard an enormous amount of testimony. Much of it was painful and frightening; some of it was hopeful and rewarding. All of it was valuable.

The Commission helped give these issues the attention and status they deserve and helped to make them a viable topic for political consideration and action.

So, the building blocks and the foundation are in place for constructing coherent, long-term and effective children's policy in Alaska. The Legislature is encouraged to act quickly in 1990 to establish an on-going Alaska Commission on Children and Youth. The next two sections of this report describe how that commission can contribute to long-term policy development and what issues make up the unfinished agenda.

■ Emerging Issues and the Policy Context

As we now make the transition from an Interim Commission on Children and Youth with some modest accomplishments to a new era with no formal entity to inherit a very large untouched and unfinished agenda, several emerging trends are worth noting. They provide a context for future policy development and a reminder that, without a body like the Interim Commission to focus attention, this agenda is unlikely to be accomplished. What we have tried to do, and what any new Commission must continue to do, is to create a comprehensive system that is rooted in prevention and which intervenes at key strategic points in every child's life. If there is no coherent policy for prevention, the result can be children's programs which are fragmented, crisis-oriented, critically under-funded and ineffective.

There is a need for bipartisan and urban-rural consensus in Alaska on the need for this investment. The emerging need for the next two to five years is to define the form, the extent, and the timetable for this investment in prevention.

The state has the tools and resources to be a driving influence in defining this investment by:

- *setting priorities;*
- *allocating resources;*
- *taking a leadership role that incorporates innovation and experimentation with new approaches;*
- *promoting administrative practices that enhance coordination of services;*
- *establishing sound long-term outcome measures and monitoring performance so we can know if policies have been successful.*

A number of specific issues will shape these policy debates in the near future, including:

- **The Economy**

  We must proactively increase funding for children's services despite state revenue decreases (for example, not reduce cost-of-living-allowances for AFDC recipients) and figure out how to invest more. We need to develop a broader revenue base and more dependable sources of funding for children's programs. We also have to promote serious consideration of children's needs by the new Alaska Science and Technology Foundation as it tackles the "public health and safety" responsibilities on its agenda.

- **Education**

  We must support the trend toward early childhood education and examine the state's role in the education of children before age five. Other critical education issues will include the Education Endowment Fund and its affect on state funding streams, whether the university system makes access to higher education easy or difficult for Alaskan youth, and the impact on elementary and secondary education of the recommendations made by the Senate Special Committee on School Performance.

- **Health Care and Health Care Financing**

  Issues of concern include how the Mental Health Lands Trust settlement will impose a shape on what statewide services are offered and how they are funded, national policy decisions affecting the federal share of Medicaid, and the growing problems of the uninsured in light of rising health care costs.

- **The Role of the Federal Government**

  Federal decisions on land issues, welfare reform, child care and other matters will affect state activity by creating areas of renewed state-federal partnership or a continuation of the new federalism of the 1980s which left much domestic leadership to the states. How this state-federal responsibility is balanced will determine the fate of many initiatives for children.

- **The Growing Trend of Children in Poverty**

  Children who live in poverty are much more likely to experience problems such as inadequate basic health care, insufficient early education, family violence, teen pregnancy, dropping out of school, alcohol and other drug abuse and unemployment. One in five Alaskan children is poor, a total of some 34,000 children.[3] Rural children, children from single-parent families, and young children are at greatest risk of being poor. This poses a clear threat to our social

fabric and to the economic health of a generation. How we combat poverty in Alaska will have profound effects on our children's well-being. What is most sobering in this picture is that Alaska's preschoolers, kids under five, are the most likely group of children to be poor. Already one in three Alaskan children is under five and there are now 17,000 more of them than there were in 1980. This is not only the fastest growing group, it is also the group at greatest risk. We ignore these trends at our peril.

- **The Continuing Challenge of Alcohol and other Drug Abuse**

  A 1988 study shows more than half of Alaska's youth have their first real drink by the 6th grade, and substance abuse statistics continue to be higher than the national average.[4] A new and alarming trend is a sharp rise in the use of illegal inhalants by children and youth. The relationship of alcohol to violence and suicide and the lack of treatment facilities for rural youth are among the issues that will continue to need significant attention.

- **Violence in Alaska**

  Alaska has an extremely high rate of violent crime directed toward children and adult family members. In FY88, the Division of Family and Youth Services provided assistance to approximately 9,000 children as a result of reports of physical and sexual abuse, and neglect.[5] Programs funded by the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault served 2,349 children in FY88 who were living in violent homes or were victims of physical or sexual abuse.[6] Twenty-six percent of adult women living in Alaska have been abused by a spouse or live-in partner at some time during their adult lives. More than 63% of the women abused in 1986 and more than 33% of those abused during their lifetime reported that their children had also been abused.[7] In 1987, the state's rate of forcible rape was one and one-half times higher than the national average.[8]

  A recent Johns Hopkins University study also indicates that Alaskan children are at extremely high risk of accidental injuries, a high percentage of which are recognized to be not accidents at all, but rather the result of abuse and neglect.[9]

  These trends of violence have remained high and will continue to require significant intervention and prevention efforts over the coming years.

- **Tri-generational Impact of Separated Native Families**

  A unique situation exists in some villages in Alaska. As a result of childhood deaths related to epidemics, and because far more young and older teenagers than today were routinely sent outside the village to boarding schools, three generations of families and, in some cases whole villages, have not lived with or

raised teenagers. Although this has been less the case since the 1970s when the Molly Hootch case (whereby the state agreed to provide students in rural villages local access to education) was decided, the domino effect of this phenomenon in terms of our efforts to promote parenting skills is obvious. Most of us raise our children in a manner similar to the way in which our own parents raised us. Many village parents and families do not have the benefit of those generational lessons because they were not raised at home by their parents or families, their parents were not raised at home, and their own children may not have been raised at home. For these parents and villages, the trial-and-error method of parenting that we all employ is made even more difficult because it is a relatively new experience and one for which there is no familial model.

- **Demographics**

  The increases in the numbers of parents working outside the home and large increases over the last generation in children living with only one parent have ongoing implications, especially since Alaskan birth and divorce rates continue to be among the highest in the nation.

  Perhaps the most serious of Alaska's current demographic trends is reported in the Alaska Federation of Natives January 1989 report.[10] Briefly, the Native birth rate is double the national rate. Already a young population with nearly a quarter of Native people being children under age 10, the birth rate is expected to grow. The number of young children living in village Alaska - where more than half of Native people will continue to live - will have grown 40% by the end of the 1980's, and the entire Native population will have doubled by the year 2000, further straining village resources already strained beyond capacity. Native youth will not be able to work in villages where there are no real prospects for cash economy growth in the villages without considerable government spending. Large numbers of Native people may then leave the villages, subsistence heritage, and tribal authority. If so, this may affect their cultural strengths and the mental and physical health of Native children. Villages may be left decimated by out-migration.

While not all of these issues relate directly to each other, taken as a whole they will affect the environment for children's services in the near future, and so they all must be considered in configuring our system of services. For example, the very best educational system cannot well serve children who, because they cannot afford decent physical and mental health care, are too sick or too troubled to learn. The very best economic climate will not fully benefit children whose parents, because they cannot find or afford quality child care, cannot be fully employed.

■ Policy Guides

We believe the following to be a representative, but not exhaustive, core set of principles for guiding Alaska in policy development.

1. **Alaska must invest in the future through emphasizing prevention, but not at the cost of essential treatment and intervention services.**

2. **Alaskans must then accept that this means: a) making a generation of investment before prevention starts paying off in a significant way, and b) taking the long view of evaluation, that is, if the effects take 5-10 years, then we cannot expect hard evaluation data in 1-2 years.**

3. **Alaska must develop a policy framework based on logical long-term strategies rather than policies which react to unfolding events.**

4. **Once policies are developed, implementation must go forward on a steady basis, improving children's lives at least modestly even when economic conditions constrain us from making more spectacular progress.**

5. **Alaska must adopt policies and invest in programs which have or support the following characteristics of long-term cost-effectiveness:**

    - They are community-based (state supported, not necessarily state-provided) with significant local control and they strengthen existing community resources as much as possible, in preference to starting up new efforts.

    - They are culturally appropriate and honor the diversity of cultural traditions among people.

    - They empower the program participants to be self sufficient and recognize that one of the best ways to do so is for those participants to help plan and lead the projects meant for them (such as youth leadership as exemplified by the Interim Com mission's Youth 2000 grants).

    - They have the effect of developing the community's economy in the long run, that is, building capacity rather than dependence.

    - They strengthen all kinds of families: single parent families, families in which both parents work outside the home, extended and blended families, etc. They acknowledge and support families as the primary social unit affecting children's well-being.

- They produce a system of services for children and families which is flexible and sensitive, and where dollars follow families across agency lines rather than following problems.

- They recognize that categorical services can ensure that underserved populations receive help but they also can prevent the inclusion of families who desperately need and want help but who happen not to fit within specialized eligibility criteria.

- They have had the benefit of considerable public input.

- They increase the awareness of the public about the issues affecting our children.

■ Roles an Ongoing Children's Commission Should Play

The Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth had some success in fulfilling the mission Governor Cowper gave to us. But the untouched and unfinished agenda is vast. The following emerge as the most important roles that an ongoing Commission can play.

- Serve as an advocate for children by aggressively informing the public and decision makers about children's concerns, adopting and publicizing more resolutions on relevant issues, writing letters on behalf of citizens' requests for help, and encouraging more people to volunteer for various commissions and task forces relevant to children's issues.

- Serve as a vehicle for two-way communication with the people of this state about the needs of children. Stimulate and hear as much public testimony as possible, especially listening to children and youth themselves, soliciting their views and gaining their insights. Also provide, between teleconference opportunities, frequent communication to the public on what it is the Commission is doing.

- Utilize the hundreds of volunteers who have expressed their interest in aiding the Commission's work by deploying them in short term, focused tasks as adjuncts to the official Commission.

- Maintain solid working relationships with various programs that serve children and their families and with different communities around the state. This includes meeting physically as a Commission or delegation in areas of the state other than Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau, and making personal visits to child care programs, youth services, and parent groups.

- Communicate to decision-makers and the public that the system of children and family services is a "house of cards" in which each part is materially affected by the strength or weakness of the other parts.

- Maintain a formal linkage to other regular and Interim Commissions and Task Forces so that joint formulation of policy is an outcome of this coordination.

- Develop and define evaluation standards to help decision makers and the public judge the investment value of the various children's initiatives.

- At the outset, adopt a decision-making process which stimulates global thinking and spirited creative debate but which uses compromise and consensus standards rather than adversarial, win-lose standards for developing recommendations.

- Through development of a partnership with each relevant executive branch department, establish a timeline for developing budget recommendations which allows the Commission to have input into each department's budget process.

- Serve as a positive role model, as an employer, as individuals and as parents, to create an atmosphere that is balanced and which nurtures everyone involved.

PRIORITY ISSUES: THE UNTOUCHED AND UNFINISHED AGENDA

Over the Interim Commission's two years, some of the major changes in programs and services for children and youth have been:

- a significant expansion in Head Start and in prenatal care for Alaskans;
- significant new monies directed toward child abuse, neglect and other family violence;
- increasing the state's Child Care Grant Program to enable programs to partially reinstate previous decreases and raise the quality of care our children get;
- expansion of respite care for children with developmental disabilities;
- empowering youth to affect their own future by encouraging youth-developed and youth-run prevention projects around the state; and
- increasing the numbers of public health nurses, Village Public Safety Officers, social workers, and social worker aides, especially in rural Alaska.

In addition, the Interim Commission's work contributed to a parallel emphasis for specific funding of children's services by a number of other bodies. One example is the statewide community-based initiative to prevent suicides that came about as a result of the Senate Special Committee on Suicide Prevention. Another is the state Board of Education's banning corporal punishment in the public schools, one of the Interim Commission's recommendations.

Although the Commission worked hard and was successful in articulating some of the problems children face, much remains to be done. This unfinished agenda falls into three broad categories: unfunded/underfunded, undeveloped, and untouched issues. The following are only examples, not an all inclusive listing.

■ Unfunded/Underfunded Issues

There are a number of proposals which the Governor made to the Legislature that remain unfunded or underfunded. Among these are:

- parent support programs such as home visits during infancy, a media campaign to build parenting skills, and parenting programs for youth and parents;

- elementary school counseling, school nursing and early childhood programs;

- greater investment in youth leadership and community action programsaround the state;

- some key alcohol and other drug abuse prevention efforts;

- proposals for expanding sex education and funds for family planning (Alaska's teen pregnancy rate is 13% above the national average);

- proposals to expand counseling services for youth who have run-away, and for a special focus on services to help the parents of runaway children; and

- many child care proposals, including new funding increases for the Day Care Assistance and the Child Care Grant programs, new funding for crisis nurseries or crisis homes to prevent child abuse, adequate funding for resource and referral agencies to help parents locate available childcare and development of family-centered, community-based programs for children with special needs.

■ Undeveloped Issues

There are some public policy issues remaining, issues about which the Children's Commission raised questions and awareness but about which we made no concrete proposals beyond what was contained in our January 1988 report to the Governor. These included an absence of:

- specific proposals for helping youth make the school to work transition;

- ways to best adhere to the Indian Child Welfare Act to both protect children and preserve culture;

- decisions about whether a certain percentage of mental health lands funds should be directed to children's mental health;

- alternative systems for hiring Native people as service providers to children when they are qualified by their life experiences and not

necessarily by having formal credentials and licenses;

- review by local decision makers of successful lower 48 models that set aside space for child care in public facilities; and
- funding for the Alaska's Children's Trust Fund. This gap is especially troubling, because Children's Trust Funds are meant to finance the primary prevention of child abuse which typical state funding streams do not. Although Alaska is one of 47 states that has a Children's Trust Fund, it is the only state that has not directed a penny to it.

■ Untouched Issues

And finally, there were issues which got no attention, despite the many requests we received to deal with them. These included:

- how to help get and keep children out of poverty in Alaska;
- how to lessen the rate of Alaskan children seriously injured or killed by accidents;
- how to guarantee that village Alaskans have an education equal to that offered urban Alaskans;
- how to provide more support to the parent who chooses to stay at home to raise her or his children rather than working outside the home;
- how to combat racial and ethnic prejudice in our state; and
- how to improve the foster care system in Alaska.

Some of these issues (such as foster care and Indian Child Welfare Act) are receiving attention from other bodies, but the Interim Commission was not able to deal directly with them at the level of attention they deserved, given their importance and scope. The new Commission will need to coordinate with groups attending to these complex issues.

■ Business and Private Sector Involvement

We did not involve business and the private sector sufficiently in our work. The private sector can help develop plans for the well-being of our children, while at the same time create a better work force for society as a whole. Alaska needs a Commission to work with parents, existing businesses, Chambers of Commerce and other community leaders to create more awareness of the economic benefits that can be realized

when businesses make quality child care, flex time, job-sharing, and other assistance programs available to their employees.

To make the required investments at the necessary level of commitment will mean government being involved in an active partnership with business. For example, it is in business' best interests for pregnant women to get good prenatal care, for Alaska to have a child care system of center and family-based care that is second to none, for all of Alaska's children who are eligible to participate in Head Start. When our Chambers of Commerce make up their legislative priorities each year, child development and family support issues must be as prominent as natural resource development.

■ Government and Public Sector Responsibilities

The flurry of activity by the Interim Commission and other bodies concerned with children over the last two years is a positive step, but many of the most significant policy questions with the most permanent impact have yet to be answered. Collectively, these questions address the responsibilities of the public sector in at least three areas. How can governments...

- *stimulate the policy debate over how these investments in children can best be financed* – whether it is reallocating existing revenue or generating new revenue, the point is that all Alaskans have a critical interest in the well-being of our children;

- *set an example of strengthening families in government's role as a major state employer* – this can be done through providing quality child care, flexible personnel practices that support parents who are government employees, and other efforts;

- *develop services and programs for children that are consistently funded, year after year, at the levels necessary to accomplish the significant goals usually set for these services* – this means protecting children's programs during times of economic belt-tightening and creatively re-configuring the way in which services are organized and provided.

Children are not a special interest, they are a common interest of us all.

The alternatives for financing our investments in children have their pluses and minuses, but Alaska must at least accelerate its candid and vigorous debate about how best to do so. For example, Minnesota uses one cent of its cigarette tax to fund its Child Health Plan, covering children up to age 9 and up to 185% of the poverty level after Medicaid drops off.[11]

In Pinellas and Dade County, Florida, voters have set up special taxing districts, where local voters approve additional mill-rate increases to fund children's services.[12] In Washington state, 200,000 voters have signed a petition to place on the ballot a referendum to increase the state sales tax by 0.9% with half the funds going to K-12 education and half to children's services.[13] A considerable part of the public sector responsibility is to ensure that this debate occurs and results in new action on behalf of financing children's services.

■ Parent Support Initiatives

Despite our efforts, Alaska did not join Minnesota, Missouri, Kentucky, Connecticut and Maryland as states with important investments in parent support programs.[14] ***This is the greatest gap in the unfinished agenda.*** Other states are moving forward with impressive amounts of funding. In North Carolina, for example, every one of the 142 school districts applied for and received a $30,000 grant to involve parents with the schools and early childhood programs, based on the Minnesota model.[15] That $4.2 million for parent support dwarfs the investment Alaska is making now. In Florida, employers are providing funds for satellite schools adjacent to the worksite in order to encourage parental participation.[16]

■ Gaps in the Child Care System

We do not yet have what can accurately be called a planned "system" in Alaska. While progress was achieved with some of our recommendations to firm up a more genuine, coordinated system of accessible, affordable and quality child care, significant gaps still remain.

We especially have gaps in programs that can provide good care for children whose parents do not work 9am-5pm hours, for infants, for children of teenage parents, and for children with special health care needs and developmental disabilities. We also have too few referral programs that keep track of what child care is available in a community. Thanks to legislative leadership, $737,000 was provided in FY89 for an array of services for children with developmental disabilities, including respite care. But that is just what it says: respite care, a break, not an ongoing, permanent resource. To prove that point, a modest $130,000 in funding to help child care centers improve their ongoing ability to care for children with developmental disabilities did not receive funding.

While additional funding was approved for the Child Care Grant Program in hopes of increasing caregiver salaries and program quality, it is still less per child than it was in FY86. And the remaining challenge is serious. A February 1989 survey of Anchorage child care programs shows that staff turnover (a critical threat to quality of care) is running at nearly 50% a year, or nearly 25% higher than the national

turnover rate.[17] The new Commission must continue to assertively seek solutions to this dilemma.

Alaska's Day Care Assistance Program (DCAP) helps bridge the gap between what child care actually costs and what families can afford to pay. The complex issue we face here is that as we improve the quality of programs and the wages of those who care for our children, we can drive up the already high cost of child care. Resolving this issue requires a further investment in DCAP in order to keep the affordability gap from widening and defeating the purpose of quality child care: to enable parents to work. Only a minimal investment in DCAP was achieved in the Interim Commission's two years, despite the fact that there are nearly 1,000 families who are eligible but currently unserved. Long term solutions to this complex relationship between quality and affordability are still elusive.

In some areas of the state there is no child care available at all. In the Yukon Kuskokwim region, for example, 54 of the 56 villages do not have a Day Care Assistance Program waiting list because there is no child care to wait for. Yet, throughout the state, it is families with pre-schoolers who are the fastest growing family group. Alaska's need for a much greater investment in child care will become more - not less - pronounced over the next 5 years.

Finally, we're going to need action to support not just the center-based but also the family home child care provider, which is the first child care choice of many working parents. What we need is a system of family home child care and center-based child care that enables parents to work, that provides quality, developmentally appropriate care at affordable rates, and that still allows caregivers to earn a decent living. That may sound like a pipedream, but in giving it our best shot we end up strengthening our families and our economy.

■ Evaluation of the Children's Agenda

A key part of our unfinished agenda is knowing the impact of what we have done to date, and how to determine the probable impact of future initiatives. Since even the earliest of the Interim Commission's proposals funded by the Legislature didn't become operational until July 1988, it is hardly possible in July 1989 to demonstrate concrete impact. What we also did not do, however, and what the new Commission must, is to develop some concrete standards to help decision makers and the public to judge the impact of the programs we're funding. Is it better for a particular program to reach great numbers of people with mild impact, or better to reach smaller numbers with deeper impact? Alaska's Commission must raise and resolve such questions.

The U.S. General Accounting Office has developed a framework to evaluate systems of children's services that might be applicable to Alaska.[18] The key word here is systems. The GAO framework may help us decide not only if a children's program had

the desired impact, but why and through what manner of interacting with other programs, laws or regulations. Alaskans will need to review that framework and tailor an evaluation scheme that makes sense for us.

We must be neither overly optimistic about the strength of our early investment in proven programs, nor overly pessimistic when more innovative pilot programs take longer than a term in office to demonstrate results. By their very nature, we will not be certain about the impact of pilot programs, nor about when we'll observe that impact. But it is important to commit to investing in both proven and also pilot programs, so that new ideas can get tested, turning carefully studied failures into replicable successes later on.

The issue of determining impact and achieving consensus on a framework within which to do so will be one of the new Commission's greatest challenges.

All these efforts will take a broad-based visionary partnership across various sectors of Alaskan society. Some would say that the two year investment of $18 million in new children's services funding is enough. That would be so only if we view the allocation as charity, wherein we give our donation and our commitment is finished. Viewed as investment instead of charity, the need for strong governmental leadership in concert with ongoing private and voluntary efforts becomes more clear. Voluntary efforts are essential, but alone cannot secure the future for our children.

PROGRESS SUMMARY

The following chart lists all the Interim Commission's original 85 recommendations and depicts progress made on each, both budget and policy items.

Following this chart, we have noted two principles which we strongly recommend for immediate consideration in policy and budget development.

Recommendations of the Interim Commission on Children and Youth
STATUS OF FUNDING AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS
FY89 and FY90

Note: The following chart lists only the total of *new* money appropriated in FY89 and FY90. However, *all* new money appropriated in FY89 was carried over into FY90. For example, in Rec. #1, the "Final Appropriation" column totals $670.5. That figure includes the $603. appropriated in FY89 and the $67.5 appropriated in FY89. In actuality, FY90 funding also included an *additional* $603.0, carried over from FY89. Although that additional amount is not included in the total, it was received by the department in FY89 and FY90.

Recommendations: #	Category	GICCY Req.: FY89 + FY90	Gov.'s Req.: FY89 + FY90	Other Req.: FY89 + FY90	Final Approp.: FY89 + FY90	Results:
PRIMARY RECOMMENDATIONS						
1	Parenting and Family Strength	$ 4,439.7	$ 1,710.6	$ —	$ 670.5	Funds provided grants through DHSS to 8 community-based agencies for parenting education, counseling, support services, and a position in DHSS to coordinate programs to prevent child abuse and neglect through parenting education and support services.
2	Life Skills Education	177.9	—	200.0	100.0	Funds, which were requested by the Senate Special Committee on Suicide Prevention, were provided through DOE for development and implementation of life skills curricula in 6 school districts. Legislation was introduced in the 16th Legislature to develop a health education curriculum.
3	Problem Prevention	(policy issue)				This recommendation suggested that between 5% and 15% of grant funds for children and youth programs be used to target prevention. As a result of the Interim Commission's efforts in this area, prevention has become a major focus of many community-based programs.
4	Comprehensive Training	1,690.6	1,088.8	—	300.0	Funds were provided through DHSS and DOE to train social workers, service providers, and teachers. Training includes identifying children who are at risk, information on child and adolescent growth and development, sensitivity to cultural diversity, legal responsibilities, and appropriate intervention (see Rec. #28).

Abbreviations: DCAP: Day Care Assistance Program; DCRA: Department of Community and Regional Affairs; DEC: Department of Environmental Conservation; DOE: Department of Education; DHSS: Department of Health and Social Services; DPS: Department of Public Safety.

Recommendations: #	Category	GICCY Req.: FY89 + FY90	Gov.'s Req.: FY89 + FY90	Other Req.: FY89 + FY90	Final Approp.: FY89 + FY90	Results
5	Increase Literacy	—	—	—	—	This recommendation requested that efforts to increase literacy through adult basic education programs and statewide programs for youth be state supported. Although no new funding was appropriated, several programs through DOE are operational: the Alaska Writing Consortium conducts 13 institutes in 7 locations with a focus on enhancing literacy and communication skills; First Lady Michael Cowper's "Look to a Book" reading campaign for very young children; and model curricula in language arts.
6	Coordination	(policy issue)				This recommendation suggested improving services to children and families by encouraging coordination and cooperation among state, local, and community groups and between state agencies. Many examples of such coordination among community-based groups exist, and the state's interdepartmental Committee on Young Children and DHSS' grant program for community-based suicide prevention efforts are just two examples of how state agencies have responded.
7	Community Activities	100.0 (policy issue)	—	—	—	Recommendations 7 and 8 encouraged communities to enlist young people to develop and implement social, recreational and community service programs, and urged schools to provide opportunities for students to earn credits through work with community service agencies. These were seen as ways to alleviate boredom, reduce risk behaviors, and provide opportunities for youth to develop leadership skills and promote self-esteem. Programs such as the Interim Commission's Youth 2000 Project grants to youth groups and the DOE's program to involve students in volunteer community service projects are examples of implementation of these recommendations.
8	Youth Leadership and Participation	(policy issue)				
9	School Nursing/ Public Health Nursing	820.0	—	—	—	Funds were requested to maintain and expand school and public health nursing services. Funds were received to hire additional Public Health Nurses for the "Healthy Baby" project (see Rec. #32).

Recommendations: #	Category	GICCY Req.: FY89 + FY90	Gov.'s Req.: FY89 + FY90	Other Req.: FY89 + FY90	Final Approp.: FY89 + FY90	Results
10	School Counseling	744.5	75.8	—	—	Funds were requested to implement a five-year plan, conduct pilot elementary school counseling programs in 8 sites, a special project to focus on counseling programs for grades 3 through 8, and to encourage school districts to provide counseling programs thorough incentive grant awards.
11	Natural Helpers/ Peer Counseling	—	—	500.0	300.0	Funds have been used to enable DHSS and DOE to cooperatively develop and implement Natural Helper programs in schools.
12	Mental Health Minimum Funding	(policy issue)				This recommendation suggested that at least 33% of funds expected from the Mental Health Lands Act be allocated to services for children and youth. There has been a significant effort to target these services, especially services for children with developmental disabilities (see Rec. #33).
13	Children and Family Research	—	—	—	—	This recommendation encouraged funding to conduct, analyze and disseminate research relevant to the status of Alaska's children and families.
14	Adolescent Health Survey	—	—	135.0	134.0	Funds were requested by the Senate Special Committee on Suicide Prevention to supplement Indian Health Service funds so that a health survey of all Alaskan high school students could be conducted. To date, 33 of the state's 55 school districts have participated, and the project's timeline may be extended this Fall to allow additional participation. A final report is expected in early 1990.
15	Hire Qualified Native Alaskans	(policy issue)				This recommendation encouraged the hiring of qualified Native Alaskans by schools and human service agencies in order to better serve Native families, provide employment opportunities for paraprofessionals, and act as role models for Native children (see Rec. #27).
16	Rural Services	162.1	162.1	—	83.6	Funds allowed DHSS to hire a coordinator to work on improved service delivery to rural Alaska. In addition, a Governor's Task Force has been established to review coordination of federal, state and local health and social service delivery programs in rural Alaska.

Abbreviations: DCAP: Day Care Assistance Program; DCRA: Department of Community and Regional Affairs; DEC: Department of Environmental Conservation; DOE: Department of Education; DHSS: Department of Health and Social Services; DPS: Department of Public Safety.

Recommendations: # Category	GICCY Req.: FY89 + FY90	Gov.'s Req.: FY89 + FY90	Other Req.: FY89 + FY90	Final Approp.: FY89 + FY90	Results
17 Juvenile Diversion	—	—	—	—	This recommendation urged refunding and expansion of the juvenile diversion program to allow youths charged with first-time, less serious offenses to do community service, pay restitution, and receive family support services. Legislation was introduced in the 15th Legislature to allow the courts to order community service in lieu of or in addition to other penalties when a minor is involved.
18 Background Checks	(policy issue)				This recommendation urged the following: development of a statewide system to provide employers with the criminal history of personnel working with or supervising children; amending criminal sentencing laws to prohibit "suspended imposition of sentence" for individuals convicted of sexual assault; and allowing for disclosure to the employer of instances of abuse by a person who works with or supervises children. Although some agencies do conduct background checks, not all criminal history information is obtained, and conducting such checks is a timely and costly process. Legislation was introduced in the 15th Legislature to require unincarcerated persons convicted of sexual assault to register with a law enforcement agency. Legislation was introduced in both the 15th and 16th Legislatures to allow DOE to request the records of a person seeking certification as a teacher or school administrator. Legislation to disallow "suspended imposition of sentence" for persons convicted fo sex offenses was passed by the 15th Legislature.
19 Law Enforcement	500.0	500.0	—	490.0	Funds were used by DPS to hire 10 additional Village Public Safety Officers (VPSO's) through contracts with 5 Native non-profit corporations and to hire an Oversight Trooper, as well as to provide training for VPSO's.
CHILD CARE RECOMMENDATIONS					
20 Child Care Grant Program	5,058.1	3,020.4	—	1,790.0	Funds to the DCRA provided for an increase to $22.50 per full time child per month to 245 existing and 115 new child care programs in 31 communities. These funds serve as a subsidy to child care programs and are used by the programs to improve the quality of care.

Recommendations: #	Category	GICCY Req.: FY89 + FY90	Gov.'s Req.: FY89 + FY90	Other Req.: FY89 + FY90	Final Approp.: FY89 + FY90	Results
21	High Quality Standards	200.0 (policy issue)	—	—	—	Funds were sought to provide incentive grants to child care programs to encourage them to become accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children's accreditation programs. Such accreditation involves a lengthy and comprehensive review process, and assures the highest quality standards. To date, only three child care programs in Alaska (Chugiak Children's Services, Starbright Preschool and Kindergarten in Anchorage, and the Career Center in Anchorage) have acquired accreditation.
22	Specialized Training	(policy issue)				This recommendation suggested that comprehensive, specialized training be provided to early childhood educators and family home child care providers. The interdepartmental Committee on Young Children may address this issue (see Rec #25).
23	Quality Infant Care	(policy issue)				This recommendation urged the state, through the DCAP, to pay one-half the cost of care for infants, if the child were in a program that met high quality standards. Infant care is the most difficult care to obtain, and the most costly.
24	Primary Grade Ratios	(policy issue)				This recommendation urged the State Board of Education to adopt a policy encouraging a maximum of 20 children per teacher in grades K-3. The DOE has instituted the "Primary Restructuring Project" to support schools in developing ways to restructure classrooms in order to provide more culturally and developmentally appropriate programs for young children. Low pupil/teacher ratios are considered an aspect of developmentally appropriate education.
25	Education and Training Grant	258.0	257.9	—	100.0	Funds to this grant program, operated by the DCRA, provided for grants to 45 child care/early childhood education programs to provide education and training opportunities for those who care for children in centers, homes, and programs (see Recs. #4 and #28).
26	Career Ladder	80.0	—	—	—	Funds were requested to develop a four-year degree program in Early Childhood Education at the University of Alaska. This recommendation sought to provide a formal education and training system to encourage careers in child care.

Abbreviations: DCAP: Day Care Assistance Program; DCRA: Department of Community and Regional Affairs; DEC: Department of Environmental Conservation; DOE: Department of Education; DHSS: Department of Health and Social Services; DPS: Department of Public Safety.

Recommendations: #	Category	GICCY Req.: FY89 + FY90	Gov.'s Req.: FY89 + FY90	Other Req.: FY89 + FY90	Final Approp.: FY89 + FY90	Results
27	Local Hire	(policy issue)				This recommendation encouraged the recruiting, training and hiring of more early childhood educators and child care providers from among Alaska's diverse cultures. The Interdepartmental Committee on Young Children may address this issue. Legislation introduced in the 16th Legislature to establish a Native Affairs Commission is responsive to this recommendation (see Rec. #45 and #46).
28	Awareness	(policy issue)				This recommendation urged that child care providers, educations and administrators be trained to heighten their awareness of cultural differences (see Rec. #4).
29	Assess in Primary Language	(policy issue)				Too often, young children are labelled as requiring special education when language is the only barrier. DOE has made language development one of its priorities, and part of the Primary Restructuring Project (see Rec. #24) is to develop language skills. The Lower Kuskokwim School District is a model of how classes can be conducted in a Native language.
30	Culturally Appropriate Materials	(policy issue)				This recommendation urged the use of culturally appropriate curricula and material by early childhood education programs in order to provide relevant and familiar activities and materials, validate personnel experiences, and develop respect and appreciation for other cultures.
31	Child Care Revolving Loan Fund	—	—	—	—	This recommendation urged that Alaska's Child Care Revolving Loan Fund program be reinstated. When it was operative, this program provided low interest loans for capital improvements which allowed centers to meet all code and licensing requirements and insure a safe physical environment.
32	Comprehensive Health Screening	1,049.7	1,530.7	—	1,515.6	Funds were provided to DHSS to hire additional public health nurses, fund the Infant Learning Program, and the WIC (Women, Infants and Children) nutritional program.

Recommendations: #	Category	GICCY Req.: FY89 + FY90	Gov.'s Req.: FY89 + FY90	Other Req.: FY89 + FY90	Final Approp.: FY89 + FY90	Results
33	Respite Care/ Therapeutic Services	1,137.0	737.0	2,233.4	2,970.4	These funds allowed for the provision of respite care for parents of children with developmental disabilities, and grants to community mental health centers to provide services to severely emotionally disturbed children. There remains a chronic and substantial shortage of respite care services for parents of children with special needs (see Rec. #74).
34	Basic Regulations	(policy issue)				The Interim Commission recommended that one standard set of regulations be used for all early childhood education and child care programs. Currently, centers are licensed by DHSS under one set of regulations and preschools are certified by DOE under a different set of regulations. The Interdepartmental Committee on Young Children will be addressing this issue.
35	Licensing and Technical Assistance	750.5	708.8	—	179.2	These funds were requested in order to meet the need for additional licensed child care spaces and to encourage centers and homes to become licensed. The funds allowed DHSS to hire 3 additional child care licensing specialists. And, although no funds were received, the DPS Fire Marshall has made the required inspection of centers a priority. In addition, the Interdepartmental Committee on Young Children provides licensing guidebooks and manuals and conducts training in the licensing procedure.
36	Interagency Coordination	(policy issue)				In response to this recommendation, the former Tri-Department Committee on Early Childhood has expanded to include six state departments (DCRA, DHSS, DOE, DPS, DEC, and Law). Now called the "Interdepartmental Committee on Young Children," it meets quarterly to discuss, develop and plan for implementation of all aspects of care and education for young children.
37	Anchorage Licensing	(policy issue)				The municipality of Anchorage assumed licensing responsibility for centers and homes in February 1989.
38	Day Care Assistance Program	1,025.0	50.0	—	650.0	The Day Care Assistance Program helps parents with certain income levels to pay for part or all of the cost of care for their children while the parents work, attend school or participate in training programs. These funds, through DCRA, will maintain those already in the program and minimally reduce the waiting list.

Abbreviations: DCAP: Day Care Assistance Program; DCRA: Department of Community and Regional Affairs; DEC: Department of Environmental Conservation; DOE: Department of Education; DHSS: Department of Health and Social Services; DPS: Department of Public Safety.

Recommendations: # Category	GICCY Req.: FY89 + FY90	Gov.'s Req.: FY89 + FY90	Other Req.: FY89 + FY90	Final Approp.: FY89 + FY90	Results
39 Facilities	(policy issue)				This recommendation urged that buildings not being used, especially those owned by the state and local governmental bodies, be made available for child care programs. No program is currently in place to accomplish that goal (see Rec. #44).
40/41 Flexible Personnel Policies/State as Model Employer	(policy issue)				The U.S. is the only industrialized nation in the world that does not have a parental leave policy. Legislation to allow for parental leave was introduced in both the 15th and 16th Legislatures. No statewide policy to provide state employees with the option of flexible work schedules in order to more easily care for their children or dependent family members yet exists, despite this recommendation.
42 Optional Child Care Benefits	(policy issue)				State employees now have the option of setting aside before tax dollars for deposit in a dependent care reimbursement account. A bill or receipt for child care is submitted, and paid out of the account.
43 Employer Sponsored Child Care	5.0	—	—	—	The DCRA will produce a brochure on the proven benefits of employer sponsored child care programs. Although urged in the recommendation, no task force has been set up to develop a statewide strategy for encouraging such care. The Department of Labor has surveyed its employees regarding their child care needs and options for an on- or near-site child care program. Legislation to provide space for child care centers in newly constructed or renovated state-owned buildings has been introduced in several legislatures but has failed to pass.
44 Municipal Child Care	(policy issue)				This recommendation urged that city planners, zoning boards and developers investigate successful models to set aside space for child care in public facilities.
45 Resource and Referral Agencies	107.9	107.9	60.0	60.0	Funds were requested to set up a statewide system of Resource and Referral Agencies. These agencies help parents locate accessible, affordable, quality care, and also recruit new child care providers. Only Child Care Connection in Anchorage receives even minimal state funding.

Recommendations: # Category	GICCY Req.: FY89 + FY90	Gov.'s Req.: FY89 + FY90	Other Req.: FY89 + FY90	Final Approp.: FY89 + FY90	Results
46 Family Home Child Care Providers	—	—	—	—	This recommendation suggested that Resource and Referral agencies be funded to recruit, initially train, and develop a continuing training program for family home child care providers. Family home child care is the type of child care most preferred by parents, especially parents of very young children (see Recs. #45 and #27).
47 Range of Care	—	—	—	—	This recommendation urged that a full range of care be made available to parents who need out-of-home care for their children (see Recs. #33 and #74).
48 School-Age Child Care	—	—	—	1,400.0	Before and after-school (latchkey) programs are provided for the school-aged children of working parents through the DOE's Community Schools programs. Programs in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Kenai, Nome, Sitka and St. Mary's provide such care for approximately 2,500 children, just a fraction of the children who need or could benefit from such care.
49 Head Start	1,285.0	1,285.0	—	1,285.0	Because of its focus on parental involvement and comprehensive services, Head Start has been recognized as a model early childhood program for the past 20+ years. Yet, only a small number of Alaskan children from low income families who are eligible for Head Start programs are enrolled. These funds provided for 10 new programs serving 232 children, and a reduction in the waiting list in rural Alaska.
50/51 Parent Support/ Media Campaign					(See Rec. #1)
YOUTH RECOMMENDATIONS					
Family Violence					
52/53 Victims of/Witnesses to Family Violence	7,352.0	5,499.8	500.0	4483.4	These funds provided additional social workers and expanded services to child victims, including residential care, prevention and early intervention programs, and support services to children and families.

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Recommendations: #	Category	GICCY Req.: FY89 + FY90	Gov.'s Req.: FY89 + FY90	Other Req.: FY89 + FY90	Final Approp.: FY89 + FY90	Results
54	Childrens' Trust Fund	—	—	—	—	This fund would provide monies solely for the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Although Alaska joined 46 other states in establishing such a fund in 1988, we are the only state that has not appropriated any money to our Trust Fund.
55	Juvenile Sex Offender Task Force	100.0	—	—	—	Although no funds were appropriated, a Task Force has been established thorough the efforts of private, non-profit agencies to design a plan to provide services to youth identified as sex offenders or at risk of offending. In addition, some programs funded through the DPS' Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault provide services for violence-prone youth (see Recs. #52 and #53).
56	Corporal Punishment	(policy issue)				In June 1989 the State Board of Education adopted regulations to ban the use of corporal punishment in all public schools in Alaska and restrict its use in private schools.
57	Child Protection System	(policy issue)				This recommendation urged that a body be charged with conducting an in-depth analysis of how the existing child protection system could be improved. Although no formal body was established, an internal review of the Division of Family and Youth Services has been completed and the final report on that review is expected in late 1989. In addition, the Division's Director will be appointing a group to review services for delinquent youth. A report of their findings will be produced.
Teen Suicide						
58	Community Plan	(policy issue)				This recommendation suggested that each community create a plan to address ways in which teen suicide could be prevented (see Rec. #62).
59	Prevention Education	150.0	150.0	150.0	150.0	Funding was provided to DOE for pilot projects in suicide prevention for the Lower Kuskokwim School District and at Mt. Edgecumbe school. Both projects are two-year efforts.

Recommendations: #	Category	GICCY Req.: FY89 + FY90	Gov.'s Req.: FY89 + FY90	Other Req.: FY89 + FY90	Final Approp.: FY89 + FY90	Results
60	Suicide Prevention Counseling	—	—	—	—	This recommendation called for community-based counseling services, through schools, teen clubs, churches, mental health centers, and alcohol treatment programs. It was recommended that counseling services be made available for purposes of suicide prevention efforts and to provide counseling to family and community members after a suicide (see Rec. #62).
61	Research	—	—	235.0	150.0	Although this recommendation spoke specifically to research that would provide information to account for the high rate of alcohol-related accidental death and suicide rates in village Alaska, the funding was provided to DHSS for purposes of providing more accurate information on death certificates. It is believed that many deaths in village Alaska which are noted as "accidental" are, in fact, suicides. Accurate death certificate information will provide a more realistic picture of the actual number of suicides.
62	Response Teams	53.6	—	900.0	600.0	Although this recommendation urged the formation of "village response teams" that could be mobilized to assist communities with emergency and follow-up counseling after a suicide occurred, the funding provided allowed for a more comprehensive approach. The funds are awarded in grants by DHSS to community-based agencies who themselves design the community's response to suicide prevention and after-care for family and community members. Allowing the services to be tailored to meet the needs of the community rather than having to tailor the grant application to meet the granting agency's requirements, means that communities are able to determine what will work best for them. A total of 55 community-based projects have been funded. These funds were requested by the Senate Special Committee on Suicide Prevention.
63	Counseling for Family and Friends	400.0	—	—	—	This recommendation suggested that community-based programs be developed to focus on out-reach, self-help efforts and counseling to friends and family of suicide victims, in an attempt to prevent future suicides (see Rec. #62).

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Recommendations: # Category	GICCY Req.: FY89 + FY90	Gov.'s Req.: FY89 + FY90	Other Req.: FY89 + FY90	Final Approp.: FY89 + FY90	Results
64 Care for Youth	—	—	—	—	This recommendation suggested that communities have appropriate facilities for care of suicidal youth and that such facilities should be alternatives to jails and hospitalization.
65 Mental Health and Alcoholism	(policy issue)				This recommendation urged closer cooperation between mental health and alcoholism treatment agencies in order to address underlying problems and to coordinate responses to suicide threats and attempts.
Substance Abuse					
66 Prevention	216.3	—	—	—	Funds were requested to replace federal funds that were to be lost. Those funds had been used to provide a variety of prevention education and activities projects.
67 Treatment Range	—	—	—	—	This recommendation urged a range of treatment options, especially in rural Alaska, for young people. Some efforts have been made to provide secure and appropriate detention for youth.
68 Children of Alcoholics	200.0	200.0	—	100.0	Approximately 5 programs were funded by DHSS to provide support services, prevention efforts, and counseling to children of alcoholics.
69 Law Enforcement	(policy issue)				This recommendation urged that greater resources be directed toward enforcing laws that prohibit selling alcohol and other substances to minors, that taxes on alcohol and tobacco be increased, that tobacco products be sold in a more restricted manner, and that a review of statutes regarding marijuana use be conducted. Many municipalities have stepped up enforcement of laws prohibiting the sale of alcohol to minors. Legislation was introduced in the 15th and passed in the 16th Legislature to increase the tax on tobacco products. Legislation was passed in the 15th Legislature making it a crime to sell or give tobacco to a minor or maintain a vending machine that is accessible to minors.

Recommendations: #	Category	GICCY Req.: FY89 + FY90	Gov.'s Req.: FY89 + FY90	Other Req.: FY89 + FY90	Final Approp.: FY89 + FY90	Results
70	Withholding Privileges	(policy issue)				Legislation was introduced in the 16th Legislature that provides for withholding a minor's license if they have been adjudicated of misconduct involving a controlled substance.
71	Fetal Alcohol Syndrome	211.1	211.1	—	143.0	Funds were provided to DHSS to achieve the goal of reducing incidences of FAS by 10% by 1991. Legislation was passed in the 16th Legislature to require posting signs in places that sell or serve alcohol warning about the correlation between alcohol consumption during pregnancy and the incidence of FAS .
Teen Pregnancy						
72	Adolescent Health Clinics	—	—	—	—	This recommendation urged that DHSS and DOE jointly fund and monitor pilot comprehensive adolescent health clinics. It was recommended that the clinics offer a broad array of services related to general physical and mental health.
73	Prenatal Care	722.0	2,295.0	—	600.0	Funds were provided to DHSS to offer services to non-medicaid eligible women to provide prenatal services. In addition to services, the funds will allow for hiring a nurse consultant. It is estimated that approximately 30 to 40 teen mothers will be served.
74	Child Care	200.0	—	—	—	Funds were requested to provide pilot infant care programs in schools in order to encourage parenting teens to remain in school. Although funds were not received for this purpose, Dimond High School in Anchorage offers such a program and Juneau-Douglas High School is considering implementation (see Rec. #33).
75	Sex Education/ Family Planning	500.0	—	—	—	Funds were requested to provide sex education and family planning programs in schools, with a special focus on sex education for young men. Legislation was introduced in the 16th Legislature to require health education curriculum, including sex education.

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Recommendations: # Category	GICCY Req.: FY89 + FY90	Gov.'s Req.: FY89 + FY90	Other Req.: FY89 + FY90	Final Approp.: FY89 + FY90	Results
Runaways					
76 Comprehensive Program	1,375.6	737.8	—	100.0	Allocated funding to DHSS was awarded to the Alaska Youth and Parent Foundation for shelter services (bed space) for runaway youth from the Anchorage and Southcentral areas. Legislation related to services for runaway youth was passed in the 15th Legislature.
77 Family Counseling	(policy issue)				This recommendation suggested that resources be made available to existing community groups and agencies to increase counseling services, especially to families experiencing divorce, and to single parent and blended families.
78 Shelter, Emancipation and Independent Living Programs	—	—	—	—	This recommendation urged supporting a broader array of programs for runaway youth who are not delinquent or in state custody. The recommendation also suggested legislative action to define the criteria for emancipation of minors and necessary statutory changes to allow more youth to participate in independent living programs. Covenant House plans to open a residence in October 1989 which will have a capacity of from 3 to 8 youth, 16 to 20 years of age. This program will provide pre-emancipation and independent living skills. In addition, the Alaska Youth and Parent Foundation provides services to youth seeking emancipation. Legislation was introduced in both the 15th and 16th Legislatures to provide pre-emancipation services.
79 Reunited Families	—	—	—	—	This recommendation urged funding programs to provide services to families who were reunited after a runaway child returned home in an effort to prevent future running. There are a number of private providers, primarily in the Anchorage area, who offer this service for a fee. Covenant House does provide some aftercare for youth and their families, and has identified such services as an area requiring expansion.

Recommendations: # Category	GICCY Req.: FY89 + FY90	Gov.'s Req.: FY89 + FY90	Other Req.: FY89 + FY90	Final Approp.: FY89 + FY90	Results
Dropouts					
80 Defining "At-Risk"	(policy issue)				This recommendation urged the State Board of Education to define "children at risk of dropping out of school" and establish minimum standards to help them. Legislation was introduced in the 16th Legislature to establish a state education policy and create an education endowment fund; legislation was introduced in the 15th and 16th legislatures to address programs and services for students at-risk of dropping; legislation was passed in the 16th legislature to establish a committee on school performance.
81 Alternative Education	—	—	—	—	This recommendation urged the Legislature to offer financial and other incentives to school districts that develop alternative education programs.
82 Uniform Definition	(policy issue)				This recommendation suggested development of a uniform definition for "drop out" and uniform reporting standards so that dropout statistics are comparable across the state.
83 Truancy and Suspension	(policy issue)				This recommendation urged local school districts to review truancy and suspension policies, especially with a view towards alternatives to out-of-school suspension and expulsion.
84 Multi-Cultural Experiences	(policy issue)				This recommendation suggested that schools provide more multicultural experiences, including the study of oral traditions, survival skills, and crafts.
FINAL RECOMMENDATION					
85 Establish Permanent Commission	(policy issue)				This recommendation urged the establishment of a permanent Alaska Commission on Children and Youth. House Bill 66 was introduced but not passed in the 16th Legislature to implement this recommendation. It is anticipated that the bill will pass during the second session of the 16th legislature and that the Commission will be established in July 1990.
	$31,071.6	20,328.7	4,913.4	18,354.7	

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IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES

In this updated report, we have included information on the following:

- our progress to date;
- what we feel are emerging trends;
- the roles a new commission should play;
- the "untouched" and "unfinished" agendas;
- public and private sector roles and responsibilities;
- where there are gaps in services; and
- a review of the children's agenda.

In the course of conducting our work, both as an Interim Commission and in preparation for publication of this updated report, two themes became increasingly obvious. These themes were not adequately addressed in appropriations, they figure prominently in emerging trends, and they should be the basis for public and private initiatives.

The Interim Commission has identified parent support and family strengthening programs and broad based prevention efforts as **immediate priorities** for funding and for consideration by the new commission.

Parent support and family strengthening initiatives were determined to be the greatest gap in the unfinished children's agenda. Alaska has not kept pace with other states who have made significant strides in incorporating such programs in policy development strategies and in the levels of financial support. The need for parent support services for all parents during various times of their child's development was testified to repeatedly by parents, by the youth who are parents-to-be, and by professionals who work closely with Alaska's families.

Prevention efforts have traditionally taken a back seat to treatment programs. While we absolutely support the need to implement new and expand existing treatment services for children and youth, equal time must be given to prevention and early intervention initiatives. Aside from the proven economic benefit of investing early to prevent problems, prevention and early intervention are recognized as the only successful, long-term solutions to the social problems we have addressed. Until and unless we learn this important lesson, we are destined to continue dealing with the same social problems, generation after generation, at ever increasing costs to the economic and emotional health and well-being of our society.

The Interim Commission strongly urges an increased emphasis, in both policy and budget development, on parent support and family strengthening programs and services, and on prevention and early intervention efforts.

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THE INTERIM COMMISSION'S FINAL WORD

Advocates for children were optimistic as we began the 1989 legislative session. We had begun to invest creatively and effectively in our children and our future and anticipated an increased investment that has not yet materialized.

Does Alaska really care for its children? The outpouring of public testimony that the Interim Commission heard over the past two years tells us that the answer is "yes." The real test now is whether we have the imagination and the will to turn that sentiment into policies, and translate that belief into budgets.

Our children's future is in our hands. We must not fail them.

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